(a) whether Buddhist and Hindu refugees residing in refugee camps in Nepal have sought assistance from Government of India for their repatriation to Bhutan;

(b) whether it has come to notice that efforts are being made for their conversion; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto and the details of steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Government are aware of representations highlighting the concerns of refugees in camps in Nepal.

(b) No.

(c) The issue of refugees living in camps in Nepal is a bilateral matter between Nepal and Bhutan. Government of India are aware that Nepal and Bhutan have been discussing ways and means to resolve the problem. Government have urged both Nepal and Bhutan, with whom we enjoy close and friendly relations, to work towards an early resolution of this humanitarian problem.

Exodus of Indians from Nepal

1064. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have raised the issue with Government of Nepal regarding gradual exodus of people of Indian origin;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) if so, the response of Government of Nepal; and

(d) whether it is a fact that such exodus is still continuing due to threats from Maoists?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Cases involving the safety and security of Indians in Nepal, including Indian businesses and joint ventures have been

taken up by the Government of India with the Government of Nepal, including at the highest levels. The Government of Nepal has been requested to investigate these cases and provide adequate security and safety to all Indians, whose welfare and security is of prime concern to the Government of India.

(c) The Government of Nepal has assured us of its full cooperation in this regard.

(d) No.

Number of PoWs in Pakistani Jails

†1065. SHRI VINAY KATIYAR:
SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Prisoners of War (PoWs) in Pakistani jails;

(b) whether a list of their names was asked for during his recent visit to Pakistan;

(c) if so, whether it was obtained;

(d) if not, whether it would be obtained in future; and

(e) whether any scheme is under consideration of Government for sending the relatives of war-prisoners to Pakistan to find them?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) According to available information, there are 74 Indian PoWs in Pakistani jails.

(b) to (d) Pakistan avers that no Indian prisoner of war is in its jails.

(e) During his visit to Pakistan in January 2007, the External Affairs Minister reiterated India's request for a visit by the families of the missing defence personnel to jails in Pakistan. President Musharraf agreed to accept a delegation of families of PoWs. Government have proposed the visit of a delegation to Pakistan in April 2007.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.